Rushikulya and Devi rivers near Gahirmatha Wild Life Sanctuary in Orissa are killed by poachers;

(b) whether it is a fact that a large number of sea turtles are now coming in groups, as every year; and

(c) if so, the details of steps taken to save these rare species from poachers?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) It is a fact that large number of Olive Ridley Turtles come every year for mass nesting on Orissa Coast particularly in Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary, Rushikulya river mouth and Devi river mouth. Chief Wildlife Warden, Orissa has reported that Olive Ridley Turtle has been killed by poachers. However, mortalities on account of Olive Ridley Turtles being caught in fishing nets are reported from time to time. Steps have been taken to check such mortalities include:-

1. Mechanised fishing has been banned in the marine waters within 5 kms. from the coast line in Orissa.
2. Use of Turtle Exclusive Device (TED) in mechanised fishing trawlers has been made mandatory and the fishermen are being trained for using the same.
3. Officers from Forest Department, Department of Fisheries and Coast Guards regularly patrol the area to check illegal fishing.
4. Protection camps with communication facilities (wireless network) have been set up at strategic points for - effective communication in the area.
5. Public awareness campaigns are organised through media Non-Government Organisations.
6. Better coordination is maintained at district level in the coastal districts for providing effective protection to Olive Ridley Turtles.

Ill Effects of BT Cotton

† 2782. DR. (SHRIMATI) KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any study about ill effects of genome cotton i.e. B.T. Cotton;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been involved in the research, development and testing of transgenic BT cotton varieties for the last five years. As per the directions of the Government, tests have been conducted on these varieties for pollen flow; effect on non-target organisms including-insects and soil microflora; and nutritional studies on poltry, fish, cows and buffaloes. These nutritional studies were conducted at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal on lactating cows; Department of Animal Nutrition, College of Vegerinary Sciences, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar on lactating buffaloes; Central Avian Research Institute (CARI), Izatnagar on poultry; and Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai on fish. These studies have not indicated any ill effects.

(c) Does not arise.

Protection of Tiger Population

2783. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that though India has the World's largest conservation programme, namely Project Tiger, the population of Tigers in the country has been decreasing;

(b) whether it is also a fact that State Governments are not strictly following the guidelines set by Project Tiger; and

(c) if so, what measure Government propose to take to ensure protection of tiger population?